

Plans to close Minnesota and Colorado recruiting offices raise retention Concerns

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Washington, D.C. –Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) today sent a letter to Peace Corps Director Ronald A. Tschetter, a Minnesota native, expressing concern about plans to close the regional recruiting offices in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Denver, Colorado later this year.

“It is my goal to see a growing number of highly qualified, diverse, and determined Americans of all ages committing themselves to serve our country as Peace Corps volunteers. Achieving this goal will require Congress to provide additional funds, which I support. It will also require a strong nation-wide recruiting presence. This plan to close the Minnesota and Colorado recruitment offices raises considerable questions about the Peace Corps future direction,” Congresswoman McCollum wrote.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the Government Reform Committee.

Text of Letter:

July 21, 2008

Director Ronald A. Tschetter

Peace Corps

The Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 – 20th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20526-0001

Dear Director Tschetter:

As a strong supporter of Peace Corps and the men and women who serve our nation as volunteers, I am dismayed to learn about plans to close the regional recruiting offices in Minnesota (Minneapolis) and Colorado (Denver). It is my understanding that this plan will go into effect in approximately four months. I can state quite clearly that unless significant recruiting benefits – qualitative and quantitative – can be demonstrated from this plan, I will work to oppose the closing of these offices.

Director Tschetter, I would request the following details related to the planned closing of the Minnesota and Colorado recruitment offices:

- When specifically are the two offices slated for closing?
- How much will you spend in FY2008 on recruitment and what percentage of that amount are the operational costs of the Minnesota and Colorado offices?
- Will there be Peace Corps staff reductions in Minnesota and Colorado?
- What is the fiscal savings associated with the closing of these two offices?
- What is the operational impact on recruitment (i.e.; total number of recruiters, supervision of recruiters, face-to-face interviews with applicants) as a result of the closing of the offices?
- Do you plan to use “contract” or non-Peace Corps staff recruiters?
- Is there an anticipated reduction of Peace Corps volunteers serving in FY2009 over the current level of approximately 8,000?

As a member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies, the Peace Corps budget is within our subcommittee’s jurisdiction. If there is a funding crisis that requires recruiting offices to be closed it is obvious that the President’s

FY2009 budget request of \$343.5 million is insufficient to meet existing agency needs. Only last week our subcommittee approved the President's full request for Peace Corps without any indication that recruiting offices would be closing. This news therefore is even more troubling considering the agency's failure to inform subcommittee members of this budget crisis in advance of action on the funding bill.

It is my goal to see a growing number of highly qualified, diverse, and determined Americans of all ages committing themselves to serve our country as Peace Corps volunteers. Achieving this goal will require Congress to provide additional funds, which I support. It will also require a strong nation-wide recruiting presence. This plan to close the Minnesota and Colorado recruitment offices raises considerable questions about the Peace Corps future direction. Director Tschetter, I have serious doubts about this decision and I look forward to a prompt response to this letter.

Sincerely,

Betty McCollum

Member of Congress

cc: Chairwoman Nita Lowey

Rep. Keith Ellison

Rep. Diane DeGette

Rep. Mark Udall

Rep. Sam Farr

Rep. Mike Honda

Rep. Jim Walsh

Rep. Chris Shays

Rep. Tom Petri

Sen. Christopher Dodd

Sen. Amy Klobuchar

Sen. Norm Coleman